

BLUE GRASS BLADE

A. T. Parker
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WE AIM TO CUT DOWN ERROR AND ESTABLISH TRUTH.

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THE TRUTH

COMES FROM ABROAD

Sanctified Hypocrites Meet With Failure in England and Big Audiences Nothing but Empty Seats

(By C. Cohen.)

Torrey and Alexander have been in England.

It was natural that their efforts should meet with success as a toadying press will testify.

The truth is, after all, that their trip was a failure as will be understood by the following from the pen of C. Cohen in the London Free-thinker. He says:—

Not very long ago, the religious press was filled with accounts of the numerous accessions that were daily being made to the Christian ranks. At that time the Torrey-Alexander Mission was in full swing, and it had been preceded by the Welsh revival under Evan Roberts, as that had been preceded by the United Free Church Mission and similar movements. And since these missions, that were, so it was reported, securing souls by the thousands, leading to a great spiritual revival, etc., there have been numerous assurances that materialism is quite discredited, and that the higher spiritual philosophy has been winning all along the line. Of course, those who had any conception of the facts of the case took all these statements for what they were worth, and were quite content to let Christian romancists get all the satisfaction possible. Imaginative productions. Facts remain facts when all is said and done, and the tendency of the age is not likely to be reversed by the ill-timed jubulations of hysterical religionists. It is less than a hundred years since good book in an hour than can be the Catholic Church admitted the revolution of the earth around the sun, but schoolboys knew it to be so nearly a couple of centuries before.

Outsiders knew all along that these Christian captures were worth. While Messrs. Torrey and Alexander were preaching at the Albert Hall to sparse congregations, many of the daily papers published the lie about packed audiences and crowds turned away. The same journals repeated the tales of Torrey's converts, although one or two of the papers reported that Torrey seemed to be the only one present who could see them. He discerned them with the eye of faith. Those who know how this mission business is run know how worthless these statistics of conversion are. Apart from the positive lies which hardly any of these professional missionaries shrink from telling, the genuine responses to the call for souls comes from those who visit mission after mission, getting saved at each, much as a confirmed drunkard would make a round of the public houses, did a system of free drinks exist. The monotony of the "experiences" recounted, and the identical phraseology used, are alone enough to show that we are dealing with experienced hands at the game. The net result of which is that all these missions are run to provide a little mental dissipation for a variety of Christians who are too mentally flabby to seek it in other directions, and far too lacking in soundness of character to develop the outlet of a healthy vice. Apart from this, their only function is to provide employment for a number of specialists in revivalism, a class of men who would certainly not be tolerated in a healthy-organized community.

Sooner or later the Churches must take their courage in both hands and face facts, and the Christian World, in a leading article on the subject, takes a gloomy view of the situation. It points out that the figures of Wesleyan Methodist Church, showing a decrease of 200 full members, 2,000 junior members, and over 6,000 on trial, are disquieting to all believers; the more so because the Wesleyan Church is symptomatic of the rest. The most successful cannot keep pace with the growth of population; the least successful show an actual decrease. When Free-thinkers are

asked for evidence of the success of their propaganda they might well point to these figures and these lamentations. Every person who drops out of the ranks of the believers does not chronicle his defection—very few do; and we have no penitent form and offer no encouragement to personal "testimony." But the result is there, and is shown in the figures and in the lamentations. We fight with time and evolution on our side, and can afford to look with confidence to the result.

When it comes to deal with the causes of the Church slump, the Christian perception of their real nature, but obviously lacks the courage to press its suspicions too closely. It thinks that the rush from village to town, and even the migrations within the city from centre to suburb, may be responsible for much of the leakage. So, too, it may immediately, but not ultimately. If religious belief was nowadays a matter of genuine conviction, and church membership more than a social convention, these would not be at the mercy of a migration from village to town, or from city to suburb. It is really because religious belief is nowadays little more than a social convention, often supported from mercenary motives, that when a man finds himself released from the social leash fuller play is given to his real feelings and opinions. It means that people can only be kept up to the religious standard so long as coercion of some sort is applied. Abolish this, give each person perfect freedom of action, and churches and chapels would soon become howling wildernesses of empty benches.

So, too, with the cause found in the unpopularity of preachers or of sermons. Of course, the man and the message will always have its influence. Still, no one can study the modern pulpit without realising that what the people want is to be entertained, and what the most popular preachers do is to try and entertain them. The entertainment being given, people will go to church, other things equal, as they go to a music hall or a theatre, and frequently stay away for the same reason.

The things named by the Christian World are not causes, but symptoms. The real causes lie much deeper than anything touched on by the writer of the article, and these are that the churches no longer possess any social or intellectual vitality. Even ordinary people are beginning to realise that on no single subject of importance has any of the churches an independent message to deliver that is worth hearing. For all their science, their philosophy, or their sociology, they have to turn elsewhere. All they get within the churches is a very faint echo of the best that can be got outside. They are so accustomed to this that they have ceased to regard it as in any way remarkable that they have to go to outsiders for the truest knowledge on the matter. Still, accustomed as people are to this, and assenting to it as they do, the absurdity of maintaining an army of men with nothing important to teach, and nothing of any value to do, gradually forces itself upon them. People are no longer easily imposed upon by the supposed learning or power of the clergy. Outside influences teach them how much this is worth, and their own experience endorses it. If people read they would find that more can be got from a gathered from sermons in a month. If they think, they realise what a game of make-believe the whole thing is; while a growing number agree with Ruskin that—

"In general, any man's becoming a clergyman in these days implies that, at best, his sentiment has overpowered his intellect; and that whatever the feebleness of the latter, the victory

of his impertinent piety has been probably owing to its alliance with his conceit, and its promise being regarded as an oracle, without the trouble of becoming wise or the grief of being so."

The Christian World writer thinks the position demands a search for remedies rather than causes. But to get true remedies one must have a knowledge of causes, otherwise little that can be done will be of avail. And in this case, the only remedies that would be of use are impossible. If the united action of the churches can possibly convert the globe into a plane, and set the sun traveling round it instead of it traveling round the sun; if gravitation can be abolished, and mystical affinities reintroduced; if causation can be replaced by miracle, and natural forces by spirits; if evolution can be replaced by special creation, and brain disease by demoniac possession; if education can be abolished, and heaven and earth re-created by the army of supernatural beings and powers destroyed during the development of modern science, then the churches have a remedy, and one they would not hesitate to use if they could. But if these things cannot be done, then the case is truly hopeless.

For, really, nothing less than a revolution of this kind can ever give back to religion its lost power. All religion is built upon the belief that the world is ruled by arbitrary supernatural intelligence, and has no real validity apart from that conception. The clergyman is fundamentally the miracle-worker, the intermediary between man and the supposed supernatural—for a cash consideration. This function is seen plainly enough in the savage medicine-man, it is almost equally evident with the Catholic priest, and it can be seen in the ordination of the Protestant clergyman and in the "call" of the dissenting preacher. All the power and influence of the clergy depends upon this belief, no matter how modified or disguised it may be. But really educated people no longer believe in the intercessory power of the clergy. Nor can they look up to the clergy on account of their superior learning. This might have been done while education was the privilege of a few, and the ability to read and write suggested something of an occult quality. But reading and writing is now universal. The clergy are no longer looked up to, they are rather looked down upon. No one of any standing values their opinion as clergymen, while as a class they are mentally inferior to any other body of educated men in the community. They have had their day, and can only maintain themselves by pandering to passion and prejudice, and acting as the protectors of interest that but for them, might have long since disappeared.

The problem for the Christian World to solve if it would save Christianity is, then, simple—in statement. It is to find out how to turn back the whole tide, of civilisation and to re-create the mental and social condition of the Dark Ages. Only this, and nothing more.

CHILD

LABOR IN NATION

Approved by a New York Banker Who
Keeps An Eye Upon His Interest
And Dividend Payments.

REFUSES DONATIONS AND
GIVES HIS REASONS

(By Stella Hardie)

None need expect that the lion and the lamb could agree upon questions of personal policy that would be acceptable to both. The lion's ways are not the lamb's ways. Then one need not be surprised that a New York banker failed to agree with those who are seeking to stamp out child labor in the United States.

I have been deeply impressed with the perusal of two letters which appeared in the New York Commercial a few days ago. Associated with Felix Adler, and other humanitarians in the work of protecting childhood of the nation, to save them and spare them from becoming dwarfed both mental and physically by close confinement, at a tender age, in the mills and factories, is Mrs. Lillian D. Wald, of New York. It will be seen from the correspondence that she had addressed a letter to a New York bank-

er asking that he contribute to the cause of the emancipation of little children. He replied, but, instead of agreeing with the lady he took a firm stand in favor of working of the children and I presume it can only be on the ground that it insures the payment of interests and dividends. I am content to let the Blade's readers judge for themselves if you can find room for the letters, which are as follows:—

Mrs. Bowen's Letter

"Dear Mr. Bowen: Do you know that thousands of our little, undeveloped children are working for wages in sweat-shops, glass factories, textile mills and coal mines? Will you be one of the 1,000 persons in the United States giving \$25 each to help emancipate them?"

"The national child labor committee has undertaken an immense task. The endorsement of President Roosevelt, ex-President Cleveland and hundreds of our foremost citizens proves the worthiness of our cause. We are leading an anti-child labor movement that is growing so rapidly we cannot keep up with it unless we have more funds. State after state is appealing to us for direction and aid in local campaigns, and we cannot respond. If the American citizens, believing in protection to the helpless, do not aid us, most of the good already done will be lost."

"Twenty-five dollars invested under our direction will do more than \$5,000 spent in unorganized effort. We are prepared to strike blows which will be felt for generations to come. Will you give us your help to the extent of \$25, payable anytime you desire within the next six months?"

The reply to that letter. Mr. Bowen replied in part, as follows:—

"You say do you that thousands of our little undeveloped children are working for wages in sweat-shops, glass factories, textile mills and coal mines?" Will you be one of one thousand persons in the United States giving \$25, each to help emancipate them? The national child labor committee has undertaken an immense task. We are leading in an anti-child labor movement that is growing so rapidly that we cannot keep up with it unless we have more funds. Two million boys and girls, under 16, in this country are working while other children play and go to school."

"Now, I will venture to predict that more useful men and men who will do things in the interest of the human race will grow from these 2,000,000 workers than will from 4,000,000 of the same age who do nothing but play and go to school. I judge from my own experience and observation, and from the testimony of many successful men, I know that I spent much of my time between the ages of 10 and 16 working in a bank, a stone quarry, warehouse and at various times other things, sometimes for wages and sometimes for wages and sometimes without, and not only think it was no injury to me on the whole, but a great benefit toward developing my mental and physical powers. I have seen and talked with many successful men, and so far as I know, they have generally learned habits of industry, long before the age of 16."

"Look over the history of the successful men of New York, the men who are doing things worth while, for themselves and others. See if they have not worked and worked hard for long hours, before they were sixteen years of age."

"There seems to be a feeling worked up amongst a large portion of the people of this country that everything should be regulated by the legislatures. In my opinion, there are far too many laws now and most of them made by impractical men, but few of them enforced, and it is a good thing that they are not, for it would take an army of people to enforce them and the result would be detrimental."

"My observation and experience would lead me to believe that most people are reasonably honest and have good intentions, but there is more misery and poverty and vice in the world because boys and girls are not taught habits of industry and usefulness at an early age than all other causes combined."

"While there are exceptions to the rule, I believe that employers generally are interested in the welfare of their employees and do more for their real interest than most of their critics would do if they were in the employer's position."

"If it were practical to pass laws to compel every child in the country, eight or ten years of age, to work and

HOW THE DOOM

OF DOGMA CAME

The Intellectual Food Offered by Theology Only Created Doubt and Led to a Complete Rejection of Faith

(By Henry Frank.)

In a series of articles written by Henry Frank and published in Tomorrow, the author portrays his transition from blind faith to right reason and in showing the point at which the final change came, says:

The struggle with my conscience was becoming intense. I was being forced to ask myself whether I was paying with my own soul and if the time must not inevitably come when I would throw the dice and cross the Rubicon.

More and more I heard the doctrines which I had caused myself to believe as the truth scoffed at and slyly mocked among the very men who in public so grandiloquently stood as their sponsors and proud defenders. At last after ardently studying "Browne on the atonement" which purported to be a reasonable and incontrovertible defense of the traditional doctrine, dressed, however, in modern habiliments, I made bold to write out my own interpretation, which was the conflict with his, and yet which I believed was a logical refutation because founded on the very premises which he himself set forth.

It was a beautiful autumn day in Minnesota. Three of us were drifting in a boat on one of Minnesota's lovely far niente lakes. One was a young man who has since been recognized as one of the most successful pulpiterators and platform lecturers in the Methodist Church and who in those days was one of my particular chums. The other possessed of a more practical mind, has since been given the opportunity to develop his commercial instinct under the guise of a minister by being made one of the agents of the Methodist Book Concern, a very responsible position in this great church.

When the poise of our spirits had come to reflect the sweet calmness of the deep blue sky above and the placid grey-green waters beneath, and we were in such mental mood as to be recipient of intellectual food and susceptible to discussion, slyly I drew from my breast-pocket the little manuscript I had written in criticism of the "Atonement," and with permission slowly read it to them.

Ardently they listened, with minds critically inclined. Occasionally they would look at each other and express either approval or surprise. But whatever their feelings, they respected mine and clearly saw that I was sincere and earnest. That, indeed I had made it clear to them that the paper was a personal document and confessed the burden of my heart no less than the thoughts of my brain, was soon made evident. At last I finished. A dead silence settled on us all. I was embarrassed. I wanted honest criticism. I heard what might mean either disdain or laudation.

Finally my nearest chum, with whom in college I had often engaged in mental wrestling matches and who has since developed into the most popular rhetorician in the church, ventured an opinion. But it was not a criticism. It was indifferent permissiveness. "Why on earth, Frank, do you want to waste your time resurrecting the dead past and trying to reconstruct it in line with the living present? The 'Atonement' isn't meant in these days to demand our reasoning powers but our powers of imagination. There is no conception in the history of man that can be made as to excite the lachrymal glands of the crowd as the picture of Jesus on the Cross. Dwell on that and not on the theology of the Atonement, and you'll carry the audience with you every time."

"But," I said, "brother, you don't mean to insist that religion is all feeling and that reason and thought have no serious place in it?"

"No, of course not. But you must learn the art of the semblance of

reasoning without actually performing it if you want to hold the crowd. What the people want in these days is pictorial eloquence and warm action in delivery. That captures them every time."

"Do you mean to tell me the church has come to this? Do our audiences consist of nothing more than assemblages of emotional animal whom we must tickle, as the visitors of the Zoo tickle the elephants with peanuts and candy?"

The practical and commercially inclined member of this social trinity blurted out in a blunder and more monitory fashion: "Frank, listen to me, do you or don't you want to remain in the Methodist ministry?"

"Naturally, I intend to remain."

"Well, then, take the advice of a friend; burn up the manuscript and never let the Elder or Bishop know that you entertained such notions. If you do, it's all day with you."

Disgust mingled with condemnation in my heart and I responded by saying that if it meant the stultification of my conscience and the price I must pay for my ministerial berth I was beginning to think I would prefer to sacrifice the latter to the former. So the years were wearing away and more and more the conviction was coming to me that all the youthful sacrifices, social, domestic, commercial, professional, I had made for the sake of becoming a minister in an orthodox church were worse than the spend-thrift follies of a cad. What had chiefly disappointed me was that the arguments I had advanced were manifestly unanswerable by these two leading church lights, and yet despite the truthfulness of my contention they preferred to swallow the violation of intellectual candor and maintain an air of faith and retaining a respectable social position.

To one who has experienced the painful suffering such disclosures effect there is something pitifully naive in the critical remarks of some of the glib reviewers of "The Doom of Dogma," who prate about the apparent dishonesty of a man continuing to preach in a church whose doctrinal standards he has been forced conscientiously to reject. It is so much easier for these respectable casuists to discover the honesty of a man who still remains in the church and refuses to let the world know his doubts though they be dark as nimbus clouds, than the honesty of the man who doubts and yet lingers to confound the insincerity of those whose miseducation has dulled the edge of their conscience and perverted their perceptions of the truth.

Nevertheless, in the course of time the spiritual burden one must carry who struggles to rise above the "anxieties of conscience" that he may adjust himself to the requirements of traditional respectability, becomes altogether too onerous to be endured. Just as I was approaching the pinnacle of my youthful ambitions and my name was beginning to be heard in the annals of the church, it began to be apparent to me that not many months would transpire before the public confession would become necessary and the abandonment of the ministry a conscientious obligation.

The last crushing experience I encountered at the disappointing period was the manifest relief the authorities of the church evince when one has been to them, "a thorn in the flesh," concludes to retire from the ranks.

It was at one of the largest conferences in the Northwest, in the dust of the twilight, immediately preceding adjournment sine die, that then to me a depressing confession was made. It was the sensation that shocked the quiet hours of the concluding session. It had been well known to all the

(Continued on Page 4.)

(Continued on Page 4.)